

A Story of Success



Before

After

When it comes to being a role model and an inspiration, Claritta Stinson, GED, takes the gold medal.

For the past two years, Claritta has been in intensive training for healthy living

– that includes proper nutrition, lots of exercise, and a complete change of lifestyle. Her competition was herself and an unflattering self-image that started in childhood. As a result, Claritta is literally half the person she was – and a whole lot happier and healthier.

“I always saw myself as someone who was heavy,” Claritta says of her teen years, “but I wasn’t.” When she was in her 20s, she gradually put on the weight, a feat made easier by her unflattering self-image.

After the scale hit 291, Claritta knew she had to do something about the weight. “I went on a diet, but I didn’t make it a life change,” she says. The diet worked – for a while. In 1999, she got down to 200.

Then she left a job that required her to be active to take her current position – a desk job – at the Department of Workforce Education. She gradually put all that weight back on and then some. By 2004, she had hit 363. Claritta admits she was in denial about her weight. She refused to step on the scale, even when she went to the doctor. And she made excuses.

Two things happened to make her face the truth. “I saw some pictures of me,” she says. “I didn’t realize I looked like that.... (And) my body started talking to me.” Her legs hurt. And even though she parked as close to the building as she could get, she got winded just walking into work.

Claritta didn’t want a repeat of her 1999 diet; she wanted lasting results. Rather than going

on a diet, she followed the *Lean for Life* plan, which includes food recommendations and deals with the attitudes and other mental aspects required for healthy living – “kind of what I missed the first time,” Claritta says. She cut out sugar and learned to eat three nutritious meals and three snacks a day and drank lots of water. In those early days, her son and daughter often served as her food police.

For exercise, Claritta had to find something she could do at 363 pounds and that would fit into her day. Her solution was *Walk Away the Pounds* video tapes, a program her son did with her. She started out just moving for 10 minutes a day and then built up to 30- to 60-minute workout programs five days a week.

When she started this program in 2004, Claritta couldn’t admit she had to lose 193 pounds; instead, she told herself she had to lose 100 pounds. She had done that before, so she knew she could do it again. That first year, she lost 124 pounds.

The rewards have been worth the struggle. “I feel so much better,” Claritta says. She now parks on top of the hill behind the office and doesn’t get winded when she goes out to her car at the end of the day.

There’s an added reward: shopping is a lot more fun as she has more variety in what she can wear and even where she can shop.

To keep herself accountable, Claritta steps on the scale every day. Today, the scale read 186 pounds – she has 16 pounds to go before reaching her ultimate goal. She says the most important part will be maintaining that weight. She’s prepared for that challenge. She’s invoked a five-pound rule; anytime her weight goes up by five pounds, she gets more focused.

She also keeps a picture journal to chronicle how far she has come. Another remnant from the past is a pair of size 32 jeans (today she fits in one leg of them). “I am no longer the same,” Claritta says, but she wants to always remember the person she was so she will not become that person again.